

TITLE

HANDHELD CONTAINER WITH REMOVABLE DIVIDER

CROSS-REFERENCE TO RELATED APPLICATION

5 This application is a continuation-in-part of the co-pending U.S. design patent application serial no. 29/180,327 filed April 21, 2003.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

10 The present invention relates generally to containers and, in particular, to a handheld container including a removable divider disposed therein.

Containers, such as paint containers for use with painting instruments including paintbrushes and paint rollers, are well known. Standard size paint containers include one-gallon cans and five-gallon plastic buckets that are not easily handheld during painting. Portable paint containers are then often utilized by painters to provide a supply of paint
15 while painting.

A common problem is that most portable paint containers are not easily manipulated by hand when it is desirable to move the portable paint container or when it is desirable to hold the portable paint container with one hand while painting with the other. Another common problem is that most paint containers are not stable when moved between
20 various locations and placed on various work surfaces. Yet another common problem for painters is finding a place to rest the paintbrush or paint roller while painting. If the paintbrush or paint roller is rested on a typical can or bucket, there is generally insufficient support for the paintbrush or paint roller, which often causes the paintbrush or paint roller to fall into or over the side of the can or bucket or disadvantageously allows a wet surface
25 of the paintbrush or roller to either contact another surface or drip excess paint onto the surface.

It is desirable, therefore, to provide a portable container that is able to be easily manipulated, is stable when placed on a work surface, and that provides a divider for separating the cavity into a paint containing portion and a portion for resting a paintbrush or
30 a paint roller.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

A handheld container according to the present invention includes a container body defining an upwardly opening cavity formed therein. A handle portion extends downwardly from a rear edge of the container body adjacent the cavity. A divider is disposed in the cavity to divide the cavity into a first portion and a second portion. The first portion is larger than the second portion and is used to store a supply of paint during use. The second portion is adjacent to the handle and is sized to receive a paintbrush or mini paint roller. In addition to dividing the cavity, the divider also provides support to the bristles end of the paintbrush when the paintbrush is rested on a lip surrounding the cavity opening. The handle permits a user to carry a supply of paint in one hand while painting with a brush or a roller with the other hand.

The divider is removable for the purpose of stacking a plurality of the container bodies during shipping or storage at a point of sale. The divider can be releasably attached to the upper surface of the bottom wall of the cavity for these purposes.

Although the container according to the present invention is described herein as being useful for painting, it has many other uses. For example, with or without the divider, the container can be used to scoop and carry bulk materials. Slot machine players can use the container to hold a quantity of coins in place of the typical plastic cup.

DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

The above, as well as other advantages of the present invention, will become readily apparent to those skilled in the art from the following detailed description of a preferred embodiment when considered in the light of the accompanying drawings in which:

Fig. 1 is a perspective view of a container in accordance with the present invention;
Fig. 2 is a top plan view of the container shown in Fig. 1; and
Fig. 3 is a cross-sectional view taken along the line 3-3 in Fig. 2.

DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENT

Referring now to Figs. 1 and 2, a handheld container in accordance with the present invention is indicated generally at 10. The container 10 includes a container body 12 and a cooperating removable divider 13 that are preferably formed of an injection molded plastic

material or similar material. The container body 12 includes a front wall 14 and a rear wall 15 connected by a pair of side walls 16. A bottom wall 17 is attached at a lower edge of each of the walls 14, 15 and 16 to form a cavity in the body 12 open at the top for retaining liquids and bulk solids. As shown in Fig. 2, in plan the body 12 is wider toward the front wall 14 and narrows toward the rear wall 15. Extending rearwardly from the rear wall 15 is a handle 18 having a generally horizontal rearwardly extending connector portion 19 attached to an upper edge of the rear wall 15 and downwardly extending grip portion 20. The connector portion 19 is generally U-shaped in cross section and the grip portion 20 has a generally square tubular shape with rounded corners and is closed by a bottom wall 21. The grip portion 20 is sized to be grasped by a human hand. The bottom walls 17 and 21 extend in generally the same plane to provide a stable base for resting the container 12 upon a horizontal support or work surface such as a countertop, a floor or a shelf of a stepladder.

The front wall 14 includes an upper portion 22 that extends generally horizontally and a lower portion 23 that extends downwardly and inwardly from the upper portion 22 to the bottom wall 17. The side walls 16 slope inwardly from top to bottom and the rear wall 15 extends in a curved vertical plane and also slopes inwardly from top to bottom. A generally vertically extending lip 24 is attached at the upper edges of the walls 14, 15 and 16, the connector portion 19 and the grip portion 20 to define an open top of the container. The lip 24 is outwardly displaced to form an inner upwardly facing step 25 and an outer downwardly facing step 26.

As best shown in Fig. 3, a pair of continuous flanges 27 is formed on interior surface of the side walls 16 and the bottom wall 17 to define a groove 28 therebetween for receiving edges of the divider 13. The flanges 27 extend up the side walls 16 short of the lip 24. The divider 27 can be thicker at an upper edge 29 than at a bottom edge 30 such that it tapers in thickness. When inserted into the groove 28, the container body 12 is separated into a larger front cavity 31, between the divider 13 and the front wall 14, and a smaller rear cavity 32, between the divider 13 and the rear wall 15. The groove 28 is configured to engage the bottom edge 30 and side edges of the divider 13 to seal against leakage of liquid between the front cavity 31 and the rear cavity 32.

A larger width rib 33 and a plurality of smaller width ribs 34 are formed on and extend in a horizontal direction partially across an inner surface of the front wall 14. The

rib 33 is positioned at the juncture of the upper portion 22 and the lower portion 23 to form a retainer for a mini roller (not shown) resting on the upper portion 22. The ribs 34 are preferably evenly spaced apart along the lower portion 23 for aiding in the removal of excess paint from a mini roller or the bristles of a paintbrush.

5 The divider 13 is removably retained in the groove 28. During shipment or storage, a plurality of the containers 10 may be advantageously stacked together with each associated divider 13 temporarily adhered, by adhesive tape or the like, to the upwardly facing surface of the bottom wall 17. As explained above, the walls 14, 15 and 16 are tapered. The walls of the grip portion 20 are tapered in a similar manner to facilitate nesting of the containers 10. A hang tab 35 can be provided on the container body 12, molded integral therewith, extending rearwardly from the lip at the handle 18. The hang tab 35 is apertured for receiving a display hook (not shown).

When the container 10 is in use for painting, for example, the divider 13 is seated in the groove 28 to define the front cavity 31, which can be filed with paint, and the rear cavity 32, which can hold a paintbrush. The handle 18 permits a person to hand carry the container 10 while painting. If desired, the bristles of a paintbrush (not shown) can be rested on the upper edge 29 of the divider 13 while the handle of the paintbrush is rested on the connector portion 19 of the handle 18. If a mini paint roller is being utilized, the roller can be rested on the upper portion 22 of the front wall 14 with a handle portion of the roller resting on the connector portion 19.

The container 10 has a number of alternate uses for holding liquid or bulk materials with, or without, the divider 13. For example, at a casino the divider 13 can be used to separate coins of differing denominations and the handle 18 allows the casino patron to move easily between various locations within the casino. In another use, the container 10 functions as a scoop device, wherein the handle 18 allows a person to easily move materials and the divider 13 may or may not be utilized.

In accordance with the provisions of the patent statutes, the present invention has been described in what is considered to represent its preferred embodiment. However, it should be noted that the invention can be practiced otherwise than as specifically illustrated and described without departing from its spirit or scope.